

Comic and Zine reviews

Mark Pawson

First up in this issue's selection of reading material you definitely won't find in the local WH Smiths is **Crap Hound**—a picture book for discussion and activity, 92 pages crammed-full of clip-art culled from innumerable sources and several decades worth of graphic imagery. **Crap Hound** #6's themes are the inevitable—death, the inescapable—Telephones, and the indispensable—scissors. For each theme there's pages of painstakingly arranged image tableaux, not an inch of valuable space has been wasted or left empty—look closer and you'll realise that it's all assembled manually with scissors and glue—not a scanner or Mac in sight, no wonder it took two years for this issue to see the light of day. **Crap Hound** is the equivalent of a Dover pictorial Sourcebook for the post-slacker zine-producing generation. Seeing **Crap Hound** for the first time is a visual onslaught, I can imagine being totally overwhelmed by it and being deterred from ever picking up scissors and a glue stick again. **Crap Hound** is the image bankers' image bank, all your image requirements are in here, leaving us to play spot-the-source. I'd advise buying three copies, one to cut up and use, one to file away intact and another to lend to friends which you'll never see again.



Book Happy and **Comic Book Heaven** both take forgotten and neglected books of yester year for their subject matter, they have lots of fun rescuing and rehabilitating old books that most people would be happy to forget ever existed.

If you like the idea of discovering cheap secondhand books, but are put off by dusty bookshops with strange odours and equally strange proprietors, then help is at hand. **Book Happy** is the latest publication from Donna 'Kooks' Kossy, your guide to the world of incredibly strange books and loopy literature—none of which is ever likely to appear in 'collectors



price guides'. In **Book Happy** #4 Donna owns up to her internet book auction addiction, she's reached the stage of checking several times a day to see if she's still in the bidding. 'Epidemic of Bad Drug Books' looks at the genre of 1950's and 1960's drugs education/exploitation titles, there's a great article about Theodore L Shaw's thirty year war against Art Critics, during which he published eight books with titles such as 'Precious Rubbish' and 'That Obnoxious Fraud: The Art Critic'. In 'Book Hell—where bad books go when they die' Dan Kelly tells how he staked out and tracked down a cache of serial killer and true crime books. There's plenty more on self-published autobiographies and the worst science fiction novel ever written. Get **Book Happy**—where enjoying cheap books doesn't mean getting the latest bestseller for 50% off at the local supermarket.

Comic Book Heaven celebrates the world of weird and absurd comics from the '50s/ '60s. A fanzine that revels in the sheer ridiculousness of these empty-headed entertainments! This issue has *Advice for Girls*, some spurious *Helpful Hints Ripped From the Pages of Actual Romance Comics of the Fifties*, a hilarious section of plot summaries from some of the most bonkers comic book stories ever! *Facts about Commies* is a collection of words of cold-war wisdom from fightin' men in the comics.

The three page list of comics with the word 'Death' in the title is wonderful found poetry, and deserves to be heard recited—

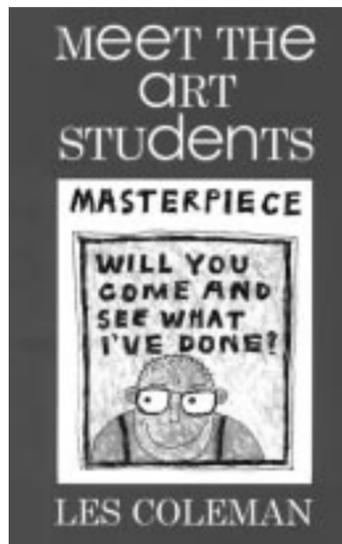
Death Relay
Death Rides High!
Death rides the 5:15
Death Rides the Guided Missile
Death rides the Iron Horse!
Death Rides the Rails
Death Rides the Stagecoach!

Death Rides the Storm!

Death ridge!

Death Rises Out of the Sea!

After two magazines devoted to old books what next? How about two comic books about Art Students...



Art School Superstars by Grennan & Sperandio and **Meet the Art Students** by Les Coleman are both collections of art student portraits, they approach similar subject matter from different continents and vastly different perspectives.

Grennan & Sperandio interviewed students at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, and then selected sound bites to represent them and accompany their portraits. The 28 privileged SFMA students are happy and proud to tell us what they like and how long they have been at the school, they're all-positive all the time. Grennan & Sperandio's full page portraits of photogenic students, in flat bright colours adorned with speech bubbles look like a collaboration between oral historian Studs Terkel and Andy Warhol's portrait screenprints.

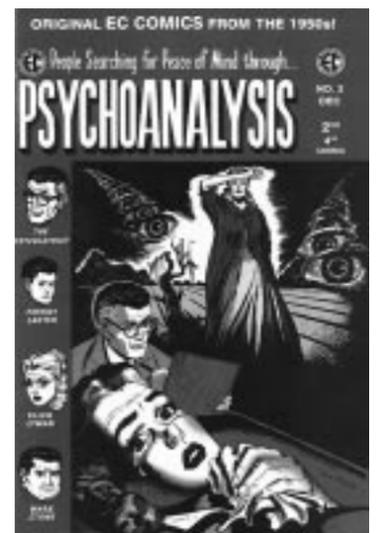
Les Coleman's caricature observations are based on his 20 years lecturing experience in art colleges around the UK. Drawn on endless train journeys to and from Newcastle and printed in graphite grey on newsprint, they



are partly intended as a critique of the educational establishments funding cuts, his class of forty-eight are each represented with a portrait, quote and title that gently mocks and sums them up. Immediately recognisable characters include: 'inner conviction', 'traditional values', 'the new philistinism' and 'art rage'. Compared with the Americans, British art students are mostly ambivalent, most of the time. With his wobbly lines courtesy of British Rail rather than Grennan & Sperandio's smooth-rough line style achieved via custom computer software programme, Coleman's student portraits say much more in less space, than Grennan & Sperandio's, and as inert and lacking motivation as they are I somehow have more time for the hapless British Students than the over-confident Americans, one of whom gladly admits "I'm studying Art because I didn't do well in Physics".



Born out of Manhattan's lower east side residents struggle for affordable housing and the right to exist free from police and state oppression **World War 3 Illustrated's** commitment and political agenda remains just as sharp and focussed as ever after a decade of publishing. Issue #27's theme is *Land and Liberty*, with comic strips and illustrated stories about Shell Oil in Nigeria, M11 Road Protests in East London, the historical struggle over who controls the land in Mexico, Reclaim the Streets New York style and the fight to keep a lower east side neighbourhood community centre. Whilst the strongest work in WW3I will always be the stark agitational graphics of founders Seth Tobocman and Peter Kuper—equally suitable for a spray-painted wall or the printed page, the editorial board put their beliefs into practice by setting up workshops and playing an active part in community education programmes, thus nurturing new artists and writers and providing a forum for



them to see their work in print. Mentioned briefly last time, and on comic shop shelves now is the reissued EC comic '*people searching for peace of mind through Psychoanalysis*', truly one of the unlikeliest comics ever published. Each issue has three, long, inaction-packed on the couch strips. Speech balloons take up so much of the frame that the patients seem obliged to lie down on the psychiatrists couch at bottom of the picture. Each session opens with 'The Psychiatrist', an archetypal pipe-smoking authority figure whose name we never learn, opening the case notes for a monthly session with one of his patients. How many therapy sessions does it take? As many as the subject's problems take before they are resolved when 'The Psychiatrist' pronounces "We've gone as far as we can! You know the cure of your problem! You know the facts about yourself! Do you think you can go ahead now without my help!" and then proceeds off to write 'therapy completed' on the case notes and thus closes the file.

Psychoanalysis doesn't go so far as to have a big red star on the cover saying "All-Freudian" but it may as well have done.

Robot Publishing Co put out a series of two-dollar minicomics which they call 'lunchtime stories'. I've seen two so far, **The Envelope Licker** and **Binibus Barnabus**—they're both printed in stylish midnight blue, with oh-so-strokeable matt-laminated covers.

The Envelope Licker by Ante Vukojevich is a meandering tale of a family equally blessed and cursed with talented tongues. After a wild youth the youngest settles down and makes his fortune as a champion envelope licker, buys the company, then loses it due to modern envelope-sealing technology, then he starts a new life and finds love with a stamp-collector who works at the post office. In

Binibus Barnabus by Robert Goodin, we meet **Binibus Barnabus** an everyday stevedore whose life revolves around working at the dock, the baseball game, and dreams of a brand new cadillac. One day at work he sees a “mer-mare” in the docks, falls in love and jumps into the water after her: turned into a merman when they kiss, we leave them happily swimming off to a new life together, far away from the docks of New York.

There's probably more 'lunchtime stories' out by now, if they are as enjoyable as these two they're well worth looking out for.



Beer Frame—the Journal of Inconspicuous Consumption, a consumer products review magazine that asks 'What the heck is this? rather than just 'Which?' Raising product reviewing to an artform, Paul Lukas searches for the most unlikely and superfluous products he can find on supermarket shelves. In **Beer Frame** #9 we get a round up of products with suggestive names: Mr Long Candy Bars, Cock Soup and Meat Sticks—they're all real, with photos to prove it, this could easily turn into a long-running feature. We also learn more than anyone really needs to know about pizza box lid supports—those little white plastic three-legged things that look like dollhouse coffee tables. **Beer Frame** celebrates their status as functional yet innocuous items that we rarely pay attention to, and warns they could disappear forever if pizza companies upgrade their cardboard boxes. There's also a look at advertising characters who take their responsibilities to the extreme, they don't just want to publicise their products, they want to be eaten themselves!—think of the old Birds Eye Country Club adverts with skinny peas and wrinkly runner beans being turned away at the gates as buffed beans parade around inside.

(Reviewer's declaration of inter-



est: a Heinz Meat-Free Ravioli label which I sent to Beer Frame is mentioned on page 9)

Very little is known about Mexican Masked Wrestlers outside their homeland, **From Parts Unknown**, the mexi-mask-pop-culture magazine! is a great way to find out more. The tag-team of masked editors have plenty of fun putting their magazine together. **From Parts Unknown** #5 has articles and interviews with Blue Demon, Zebra Kid and Super Astro, there's a mexican tour diary, behind the scenes report with the men who make the masks, japanese masked wrestlers, a comic art gallery with some esteemed contributors and there's plenty on silver-masked El Santo the most famous lucha libre star of all, veteran of innumerable Z-grade films and his own series of photonovellas. **From Parts Unknown** keeps the photonovella tradition alive and up to date with their Stacked Grapplers supplement.



Contact Details

Comic Book Heaven #1
36 pgs \$1.95
SLG Publishing
<http://members.aol.com/scottjava>

Crap Hound #6
A4 92pgs \$6+p/p
PO Box 40373, Portland)OR
97240-0373 USA
*available in UK
from disinfortainment*

Book Happy #4
A4 36pgs £3.00
Donna Kossy, PO Box 86663,
Portland OR 97286 USA
<http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/bookhell>
KOOKS WEBSITE?
www.teleport.com/~dkossy/giftshop.html
*available in UK
from disinfortainment*

From Parts Unknown #5 A4 £2.95
PO Box 54-1133, Waltham, MA
02454-1133 USA
<http://people.ne.mediaone.net/frompartsunknown>
*available in UK
from disinfortainment*

Beer Frame #9
A5 48 pgs £1.95
160 St John's Place Brooklyn NY
11217 USA
<http://www.core77.com/inconspicuous/index.html>
*available in UK
from disinfortainment*

Psychoanalysis #3
\$2.50
gemstone PO Box 469 West
plains, MO 65775-0469 USA
<http://www.gemstonepub.com>

Meet the Art Students
£4.95
Arc Publications, Nanholme
Mill, Shaw Wood Road,
Todmorden, Lancs, OL14 6DA

Art School Superstars
A4 28pgs No Price Given
Fantagraphics Books 7563 Lake
City NE Seattle WA 98115 USA

Lunchtime Stories
\$2.00
Robot Publishing Co, 542 s.los
robls, pasadena, CA 91101
<http://www.robotpub.com>

World War 3 Illustrated #27
68 pgs \$3.50
PO Box 20777, Thompkins Sq
Sta, NY NY 10009 USA
*available in UK from AK distribu-
tion POBox 12766, Edinburgh
EH8 9YE http://www.akuk.com
and Tower Records*

disinfotainment
PO Box 664 London E3 4QR
www.mpawson.demon.co.uk